United Nations A/60/PV.74

General Assembly

Sixtieth session

Official Records

74th plenary meeting
Monday, 27 March 2006, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Eliasson ..... (Sweden)

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

In the absence of the President, Ms. Bahemuka (Kenya), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Statement by the Acting President

The Acting President: As members may be aware, we learned today that the President of the General Assembly, Ambassador Jan Eliasson, has been promoted by the Government of Sweden to the rank of Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden. On behalf of all members, I would like to congratulate the President and to wish him very well.

I believe that it is also a very good sign for all of us that we now have a President of the General Assembly who is a Foreign Minister. I hope that he will bring renewed energy to the Assembly when he returns tomorrow and that all members share this joy with me.

Agenda item 128 (*continued*)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/60/650/Add.5 and A/60/650/Add.6)

The Acting President: Before turning to the items on our agenda, I would like to invite the attention of the General Assembly to documents A/60/650/Add.5 and A/60/650/Add.6, in which the Secretary-General informs the President of the General Assembly that, since the issuance of his communications contained in documents A/60/650 and addenda 1 to 4, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire and Dominica have made the necessary payments to reduce their arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter.

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of the information contained in those documents?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 45 (*continued*)

Follow-up to the outcome of the twenty-sixth special session: implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS

Conference room paper (A/60/CRP.2)

Draft decision submitted by the President of the General Assembly (A/60/L.51)

The Acting President: Members will recall that the General Assembly, in its resolution 60/224 of 23 December 2005, adopted under this item, requested the President of the General Assembly, following appropriate consultations with Member States, to draw up a list of relevant civil society representatives other than those already included in the resolution and to submit the list to Member States for consideration on a no-objection basis for a final decision by the Assembly.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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After the necessary consultations, the General Assembly now has before it a conference room paper, circulated as document A/60/CRP.2, containing the list of civil society representatives invited to participate in the high-level meeting, including round tables and panel discussions.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft decision A/60/L.51, entitled "Participation of civil society representatives in the high-level meeting and comprehensive review of the progress achieved in realizing the targets set out in the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, to be convened from 31 May to 2 June 2006".

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft decision A/60/L.51?

Draft decision A/60/L.51 was adopted.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the representative of Japan on a point of order.

Ms. Yamamoto (Japan): I have to point out a small error in document A/60/CRP.2. On page 37, with regard to the reference to the Africa Japan Forum, the country name "Indonesia" should be changed to "Japan".

The Acting President: The Secretariat has taken note of that correction.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 45.

Agenda item 49 (*continued*)

Information and communication technologies for development

Note by the Secretary-General (A/60/687)

Draft resolution (A/60/L.50)

The Acting President: Members will recall that, in accordance with decision 58/569 of 1 July 2004, the General Assembly decided to consider the report of the World Summit on the Information Society directly in a plenary meeting at its sixtieth session, notwithstanding the fact that the item would be allocated to the Second Committee.

In that connection, a note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the World Summit on the Information Society has been circulated in document A/60/687.

Information and communication technologies constitute a critical issue in the wider field of development. Members will recall that, last September, world leaders gathered here in New York renewed their commitments to ensure the timely and full realization of the development goals and objectives that were agreed upon at the major United Nations conferences and summits, including those that were agreed upon at the Millennium Summit, described as the Millennium Development Goals. The world leaders recognized the key role of science and technology, including information and communication as part of the vital means for the achievement of the Development Goals.

As members are also aware, the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society, which took place in Tunis from 16 to 18 November 2005, contributed substantially to the strengthening of our common vision of an information society that is people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented.

Two years after the Geneva Plan of Action, which established critical targets for global connectivity by 2015, the world community has the Tunis Agenda, which, among other things, provides specific steps to bridge the digital divide and to turn principles into actions, such as the setting up of financial mechanisms and the follow-up of the decisions taken in Geneva and Tunis. Today's meeting can therefore clearly be considered as a further step in our collective action to implement the 2005 World Summit Outcome in the field of development.

Let me commend all those who have worked in a spirit of furthering this wonderful idea since 2001, when the General Assembly endorsed the holding of the World Summit on the Information Society, especially Switzerland and Tunisia, the International Telecommunication Union and all the participants who made the two phases of the World Summit on the Information Society a real success.

For many, the Internet has become an essential part of both their business and personal life. But, unfortunately, for billions of people, it still remains out of reach. We need to change that. The Internet can help the poorest in the world to gain access to information, education and markets, and to harness their full development potential. It can give a greater voice to those who have been marginalized. The world needs to

ensure that all the benefits that the Internet can bring are accessible to as many people as possible, particularly in the developing world.

We also need to find ways to protect people from the more harmful aspects of the Internet, while always ensuring that the Internet is governed in a way that ensures freedom of access to information and freedom of expression. A system of Internet governance is required that embraces multilateral cooperation and involves Governments, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, broader civil society and the media.

In our global world, we have no choice but to work together at the national and international levels if we want to enable people everywhere to fully enjoy the greatest benefits of information and communication technologies.

I now give the floor to Mr. Montasser Ouaili, Minister of Communications Technologies of the Republic of Tunisia, to introduce draft resolution A/60/L.50.

Mr. Ouaili (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should first like to thank you, Madam President, for having convened this plenary meeting of the General Assembly. I would also like to thank you for your introductory statement, which reflected the importance that you and the General Assembly attach to the agenda item before us.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General for the interest he has always accorded to the World Summit on the Information Society and for his participation in the Tunis phase, which was held from 16 to 18 November 2005.

Tunisia and its leader, Mr. Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, as well as our Government and people, were pleased to host the Summit, sparing no effort to ensure its success. The Tunis phase of the World Summit on the Information Society was marked by the presence of a record number of participants representing Governments, international and intergovernmental organizations, civil society, the private sector and the media. Their participation was greatly appreciated. We hope that they will have the best memories of Tunisia as an open and hospitable country.

Eight years ago, the President of the Republic of Tunisia proposed to the Conference of Plenipotentiaries of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), meeting in Minneapolis, the holding of a high-level international summit on the information society. At that time the world was still in the initial stage of the digital revolution, which has since acquired tremendous dimensions. During its first phase, the World Summit on the Information Society confirmed the impact of the digital revolution on already perceptible economic, social and cultural disparities. In its final phase, it provided promising solutions for the future of our countries.

As a factor for growth, the development of information and communication technologies has not always been equally shared. The digital divide between countries, regions and social categories has grown over the years, at a time when information and communication technologies should have served as a factor for integration and should have actively contributed to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

When used soundly and in a manner suited to the local context, information and communication technologies can enhance economic and human development and open up prospects for partnership and investment. Today more than ever before, the integration of information and communication technologies as a strategic development tool is no longer a choice; it is an imperative. Accordingly, the international community must intensify its efforts to enable all countries, in particular the least developed, to benefit from the digital revolution. It must also ensure the conditions that will encourage the establishment of an international digital partnership based on a common vision of solidarity, complementarity and joint development.

The World Summit on the Information Society was held at Geneva and Tunis in the light of that vision of solidarity and partnership. The holding of the Summit in two phases — the first in a country of the North and the second in one of the South — was intended to send a message of solidarity calling for the establishment of a bridge between various levels of development and different digital realities. The outcome documents of the Summit's two phases, in particular the Tunis Commitment and the Tunis Agenda, were the culmination of a long preparatory process to which all parties involved greatly contributed with a view to achieving concrete results that would serve the interests of all peoples.

I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate Tunisia's gratitude to all those who actively participated in the process for the great efforts they made to reach the consensus that we had set as our common goal. Allow me also to commend the important role played by the International Telecommunication Union and its Secretary General, Mr. Yoshio Utsumi, the most senior official in charge of the organization of the Summit.

Considered as the summit of solutions, the Tunis phase made it possible to meet challenges and achieve a set of results whose implementation and follow-up will be undertaken by all stakeholders, including Governments, international and intergovernmental organizations, civil society and the private sector.

The year 2015, which is the date that has been set for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, has also been adopted as the reference date to examine the overall implementation of the results of the World Summit on the Information Society. The Tunis Commitment expresses the political will of the international community to implement the obligations undertaken during the two phases of the Summit to bridge the digital divide and to establish a balanced development-oriented information society.

The Tunis Agenda covers three main areas: financial mechanisms for bridging the digital divide, Internet governance and the implementation of, and follow-up to, the Summit outcome. We are now in the post-Tunis stage. All stakeholders — including Governments, international and intergovernmental organizations, civil society and the private sector — whatever their priorities and areas of interest, must live up to their commitments to contribute effectively to implementing the results of both phases of the Summit and to bring about international awareness regarding the establishment of a more balanced, harmonious and consolidated information society.

With the support of many Member States, my country has taken the initiative to submit draft resolution A/60/L.50 to the General Assembly, which I have the honour to introduce today. The draft resolution, which is entitled "World Summit on the Information Society", was the outcome of broad consultations with South Africa, representing the Group of 77, Switzerland, China, and Turkey; Belarus, Norway and Canada have also joined the list of sponsors. Broad consultations on this draft resolution took place in a spirit of consensus and constructive participation.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to all delegations for the interest they showed in finalizing the draft resolution in such a short period of time. In particular, that underscored the will of the international community to maintain the momentum generated by the World Summit on the Information Society and to implement its results.

The draft resolution calls for the implementation and follow-up of the outcomes of the Summit's two phases by all actors concerned, including Governments, international and intergovernmental organizations, representatives of civil society and the private sector. It requests the Economic and Social Council to oversee the follow-up of the outcomes of the Geneva and Tunis phases of the World Summit. To that end, it calls on the Council to review, at its 2006 substantive session, the mandate, agenda and composition of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development. Lastly, the draft resolution calls upon the General Assembly to carry out an overall review, in 2015, of the implementation of the Summit outcomes, as well as to proclaim 17 May as annual World Information Society Day.

On behalf of the delegation of Tunisia and the other sponsors, I wish to express the hope that the draft resolution will enjoy the unanimous support of the General Assembly. That will make it possible not only to consolidate the Summit's results, but also to keep alive the flame lit in Minneapolis, which reached Tunis after Geneva and will illuminate the path that humankind will take in future as regards the digital revolution we are currently all witnessing.

Mr. Al-Shamsi (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset and on behalf of the Arab Group, I have the great pleasure of thanking you, Madam President, for the commendable manner in which you presided over the consultations on agenda item 49, entitled "Information and communication technologies for development". I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Montasser Ouaili, Minister of Communications Technologies of the Republic of Tunisia, for his introduction of the draft resolution contained in document A/60/L.50. We wish also to thank the sisterly country of Tunisia for its enormous and remarkable efforts in hosting the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society from 16

to 18 November 2005, as well as for having made that gathering a success.

We welcome the documents adopted by the Summit, which included a number of important resolutions and recommendations based on the Declaration of Principles and the Plan of Action of the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society, which took place in Geneva in 2003. An international commitment to those resolutions and recommendations would remove the obstacles impeding our common efforts to reach the internationally agreed Millennium Development Goals, especially in developing countries.

Recognizing the importance of the key role played by information and communication technologies in raising public awareness, especially in recent years, and promoting public participation in effecting positive change in current political, economic, social, human and environmental conditions, requires development and access to information and communication technologies at the national, regional and international levels, so as to reach our multidimensional goals — establishing security, peace, stability, democracy, social cohesion, good governance and the rule of law and fostering sustainable development throughout the world.

The unequal access to and spread of technology is one of the main factors in the creation of a growing digital and civilizational divide between developed and developing countries. The lack of financial, economic and scientific resources has impeded developing countries' access to modern media and technology and prevented them from using such benefits to achieve their economic, social and environmental development goals, as called for by United Nations international conferences, including the Millennium Summit and the High-level Plenary Meeting of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly.

We are disturbed by the clear disparity that exists in terms of access to modern information and communication technologies. That disparity has led, in one way or another, to disregard for many crucial issues and problems facing the developing world. It has also encouraged irresponsible media in some countries to deliberately distort the historical, cultural and religious truths and beliefs of certain peoples. We must underscore the fact that developed and donor countries and international financial institutions have a responsibility to increase their assistance to developing countries in line with the Monterrey Consensus, especially as regards providing equitable, fair and affordable access to information and communication technologies and developing human capacities.

We also call for the establishment of appropriate legal and moral standards to regulate the process of creating and developing technology and communications media and to prevent them from being used for criminal, ethnic or terrorist activities or for the deliberate distortion of facts and information. Moreover, we call for the elaboration of laws and regulations that ensure the objectivity, transparency and credibility of parties responsible for managing and providing such technologies and that promote their full respect for religious belief and the educational and cultural diversity of peoples, without any form of ethnic intolerance and in keeping with the principles of the Charter.

Strengthening the role of the United Nations in confronting growing international threats — particularly in maintaining international peace and security and addressing international economic, social and environmental problems in accordance with the recommendations of the Millennium Summit and the outcome document (resolution 60/1) of the High-level Plenary Meeting at the sixtieth session of the General Assembly — requires, now more than ever before, that we create modern information and communications media as essential means to develop the work of the Organization so that it can effectively carry out its full responsibilities. Therefore, and because we attach great importance to the clear role of the United Nations system in reforming and improving living conditions in developing countries and enhancing developing-country participation in the implementation of development programmes, we call for the development of information and communication technology (ICT) capacities in United Nations departments and agencies to improve the implementation of development and cultural programmes and activities in many developing countries.

In that connection, we support the Secretary-General's proposal contained in his most recent report (A/60/692), entitled "Investing in the United Nations: for a stronger Organization worldwide", which recommends that the post of chief information technology officer be created. We also commend the Secretary-General's call for the modernization of

information and communications technology systems in all United Nations divisions and departments. Here, we emphasize the need to ensure, in implementing these recommendations, that Arabic language services are enhanced in all modern technology systems, including those related to document translation and conference interpretation services, Internet publishing, radio and television broadcasting and other useful communications and cultural programmes, to foster interaction among Arabic-speaking peoples and countries — which represent 10 per cent of all Member States of the Organization — in United Nations programmes and activities.

In conclusion, the Arab Group supports the proposals calling for the expansion of the rules of procedure and agenda of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development to make it possible to follow up on the implementation of the recommendations and decisions adopted at the Geneva and Tunisia World Summits on the Information Society. We also support the proposal calling on the General Assembly to review by 2015 the progress made in implementing these recommendations, particularly those related to the establishment of the Digital Solidarity Fund to assist developing countries with transitional economies in gaining access to information and communications technology, including Internet services, and in implementing the necessary institutional reforms. In addition, we call for the strengthening of partnerships among multi-stakeholders in developing countries — including in the private sector, civil society and governmental and non-governmental organizations — so as to develop the international policies and legal and regulatory frameworks required for the establishment of joint international enterprises to strengthen ICT infrastructure in developing countries and to improve their access to Internet services in their native languages. That would enable us to attain our common objective: an inclusive, balanced and equitable approach to the building of an international information society that can achieve positive results, including bridging the digital divide, providing digital opportunities to everyone and fulfilling our peoples' aspirations and desires to enjoy the benefits of sustainable development, stability and a comfortable modern life.

Mr. Marschik (Austria): I have the pleasure to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The acceding countries Bulgaria and Romania, the candidate countries Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey, the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia and Montenegro, and the European Free Trade Association country Norway, member of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, all align themselves with this statement.

On behalf of the European Union, and in the presence of Minister Montasser Ouaili, I would like to thank Tunisia for hosting the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society, held from 16 to 18 November 2005 in Tunis. We also want to thank all other participants, in particular the members of the United Nations family and the various stakeholders who spared no effort to achieve concrete results and to make the Summit a success.

The spirit of the Tunis Summit leads us further along the path from theoretical principles to action. The Tunis documents address the open issues from Geneva on Internet governance and financial mechanisms. They promote the establishment of partnerships among the various stakeholders of the information society.

By reaffirming the Geneva principles, the Tunis Summit also reiterated that freedom of expression and the free flow of information, ideas and knowledge are essential for the information society. In Tunis, we reaffirmed our commitment to bridge the digital divide and recognized the important role of information and communication technologies in promoting the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

The European Union firmly believes that we need to take a comprehensive view with respect to digital solidarity. While stressing the need to focus on the mobilization of resources through existing financial mechanisms, we welcome the establishment of the Digital Solidarity Fund last year in Geneva as a voluntary and complementary financial mechanism for funding the information society.

The EU is satisfied that Internet governance has been established as a core issue of the information society agenda. In order to address the key elements of Internet governance, the Tunis Summit recognized the need for enhanced cooperation to enable Governments to carry out their roles and responsibilities. A process towards enhanced cooperation, involving all relevant

organizations, is to be launched by the Secretary-General, and we are looking forward to his initiatives in that respect.

We welcome the fact that the Secretary-General was asked to convene a meeting of the new forum for multi-stakeholder policy dialogue, the Internet Governance Forum (IGF). The EU also welcomes the announcement that the inaugural meeting of this forum will be held in Athens from 30 October to 2 November of this year.

We have stressed the need for a multi-stakeholder approach also with regard to the implementation process of the Tunis Summit, recalling in particular the indicative, non-exhaustive character of the list of facilitators for the action lines of the Geneva Plan of Action as contained in the Annex to the Tunis Agenda.

The EU believes that a multi-stakeholder approach is essential for the system-wide follow-up to the World Summit to be overseen by the Economic and Social Council, in particular with regard to the review of the mandate, agenda and composition of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development which the Council will consider later this year.

Finally, the EU is prepared to further contribute constructively to the follow-up and implementation process of the Summit as foreseen in the Tunis documents.

Mr. Maqungo (South Africa): It is indeed an honour to be speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The draft resolution on the World Summit on the Information Society, as contained in document A/60/L.50, under agenda item 49, is the result of a long and unique process that started in December 2003 in Geneva and ended in November 2005 in Tunisia, involving Governments, the private sector and civil society. We would therefore like to take this opportunity to once again thank the Tunisian Government for hosting a successful Summit, as reflected by its outcomes in the form of the Tunis Commitments and the Tunis Agenda.

The need for a multi-stakeholder approach reflects the reality of today's global system, in which it is required that all partners become involved to create an information society that is inclusive, people-centred and development-focused.

The G-77 and China is particularly pleased that it has been acknowledged that information communication technology can be a powerful tool for development and that it can offer many opportunities to the disadvantaged sectors of society. Indeed, the creation of an inclusive and development-oriented information society is in the best interests of the majority of humanity, because most of the peoples of the world, especially in developing countries, are confronted by the challenge of exclusion in the context of the global economy in whose development modern information and communication technologies play a vital role. It is important to recognize in this body that the proper use of information technology could assist in the eradication of poverty and in attaining the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

By adopting this resolution we would transmit our intention to implement the outcome of the Geneva and Tunis Summits. We indicate, inter alia, our reaffirmation that the international management of the Internet should be a multilateral, transparent and democratic process, with the full involvement of Governments, the private sector, civil society and international organizations. Accordingly, one of the fundamental challenges facing us all is to build multilateral and multi-stakeholder institutions and systems rooted within the United Nations system to ensure inclusive and equitable access to information technologies within the context of an Internet governance system that is legitimate, transparent and accountable.

The importance of enhanced cooperation involving all relevant organizations and all stakeholders in their respective roles is also emphasized. Furthermore, the important role of the United Nations, through the Economic and Social Council and the possible strengthening of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, is also addressed.

We need to ensure that progress on the implementation of the Geneva and Tunis Summits is monitored and followed up. In this regard we welcome the proposal to request the Secretary-General to submit a report to the General Assembly through the Economic and Social Council that will, among others, look at recommendations on the follow-up process. The international community, in particular the United Nations, needs to remain engaged to ensure that the

digital divide between the developed and the developing world is bridged in order to contribute to the eradication of poverty and to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

Therefore, it is indeed a great pleasure for South Africa, on behalf of G-77 and China, to have co-sponsored the draft resolution introduced by Mr. Montasser Ouaili, the Minister of Communication Technologies of Tunisia.

Mr. Valle (Brazil): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Member States of the Latin American and Caribbean Group.

The World Summit on the Information Society ended successfully on 18 November 2005 with the approval of the Tunis Commitments and the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society. Now a new phase begins: the implementation and follow-up of the decisions made in Geneva in 2003 and in Tunis in 2005. We must prepare ourselves to address this new challenge.

As we all know, international implementation and follow-up is well defined in the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society as a two-level approach.

In the first level, the Secretary-General is requested to establish, in consultations with the Chief Executives Board and within it, a United Nations group on the Information Society consisting of the relevant United Nations bodies, with the mandate to facilitate the implementation of the World Summit outcomes. We should underline the need for integrated coordination between agencies. Multi-stakeholder implementation should be organized around these themes and action lines. The International Telecommunications Union, UNESCO and the United Nations Development Programme should play leading facilitating roles in the implementation of the Plan of Action and on action lines.

The Secretary-General is also requested to report to the General Assembly through the Economic and Social Council by June 2006, on the modalities of the interagency coordination of the implementation of the World Summit outcomes.

The second level relates to the follow-up of World Summit outcomes.

The Economic and Social Council is requested to oversee the system-wide follow-up of the Geneva and Tunis World Summit outcomes. To that end, the Economic and Social Council is also requested to review the mandate, agenda and composition of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, including considering the strengthening of the Commission, taking into account the multi-stakeholder approach.

It is important that all stakeholders — that is, Governments, civil society, the private sector and international organizations — participate in this process. Inter-agency coordination for this implementation needs political guidance and feedback to be given by those actors in an interactive process within the Economic and Social Council and within the scope of United Nations General Assembly resolution 57/270 B. Policy debate should be an integral part at this level.

In resolution 57/270 B, the Economic and Social Council is recognized as the central mechanism for system-wide coordination of the follow-up to the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields. This mandate was reiterated in the 2005 World Summit Outcome (resolution 60/1).

The Economic and Social Council deals with various issues in the economic, social and humanitarian fields. For that reason, it has established functional commissions that may dedicate themselves exclusively and extensively to specific topics, including the follow-up to United Nations conferences and summits. In Tunis, we decided not to create new operative bodies for the follow-up and decided that the Commission on Science and Technology for Development would help the Economic and Social Council in the global follow-up of the World Summit. At present, the General Assembly is discussing Economic and Social Council reform, with a view to ensuring the follow-up of major conferences and summits in an integrated manner, but this does not preclude functional commissions continuing with their mandates with regard to follow-up of specific conferences.

The Commission on Science and Technology for Development will have to be reformed in order to be ready for this new challenge: to become the leading organ for the substantive follow-up of the implementation of decisions of the World Summit on the Information Society. That is the task for the

Economic and Social Council in its substantive session that will take place in Geneva in July 2006.

For an open, transparent and inclusive discussion on the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, the Economic and Social Council will need some input. We may see three types of input. One of them will come in the form of recommendations by the Secretary-General. As we know, in his report to the General Assembly, through the Economic and Social Council, the Secretary-General was requested to include recommendations on the follow-up process. That report is the responsibility of the Secretary-General.

Having said that, it is important to recognize that inter-agency consultation is necessary on how to serve the Commission in the best possible way. The support that should be lent by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), UNESCO and other agencies to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) as the secretariat of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development is very important.

Secondly, there are already some inputs that could be considered for the strengthening of the Commission, such as some of the proposals made by the United Nations Information and Communications Technologies Task Force with regard to a global alliance for information and communication technologies and development.

Another input should be provided by the Commission on Science and Technology for Development in the form of proposals on its review for consideration by the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session. The Council should request the Commission to work on proposals in a discussion open to all stakeholders during its May session. This discussion could take place in parallel to the work related to the items on the Commission's agenda.

Other inputs should come from different stakeholders. In order for those inputs to be submitted in time to be considered by the Council, they should be presented, in the form of non-papers and written proposals, within the required time frame. The deadline should be in June, the same date set for the reports of the Secretary-General and of the Commission. It might even be advisable for proposals to be sent to the Commission meeting scheduled for May.

The Economic and Social Council could establish an open-ended working group in Geneva, with the participation of the private sector and civil society, when these inputs become available in June, charged with the task of preparing a draft text that could be considered by the Council at its substantive session.

It is important to remember that the first procedural step in this whole process after Tunis is the report of the Secretary-General of the ITU, in his capacity as Secretary-General of the Summit, to the General Assembly on the outcome of the World Summit on the Information Society.

We may foresee the following schedule from here to July 2006. In May, in Geneva, there will be a session of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development to consider proposals for the review of the Commission. In June, there will be inputs: the report of the United Nations Secretary-General to the General Assembly through the Economic and Social Council, including recommendations for follow-up to the World Summit on the Information Society; report of the Commission session to the Economic and Social Council; stakeholders' proposals for consideration by the Economic and Social Council; and possible establishment of a working group in Geneva to elaborate a draft proposal for consideration by the Economic and Social Council. Scheduled for July is the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council in Geneva and review of the CSTD mandate, agenda and composition.

The goal of this whole process should be to allow for the Commission, at its May 2007 session, to start overseeing the follow-up to the World Summit. Following the request made in Tunis, the Economic and Social Council could decide in July 2006 that the Commission, as a functional commission of the Economic and Social Council, should have primary responsibility for the follow-up of the implementation of the World Summit outcomes. It must also decide, and as required, on the agenda, composition, mandate and strengthening of the Commission. It would be convenient if the Council could agree on a programme of work for the Commission for the following years, ending in 2015, in order to address the follow-up of the core issues of the World Summit outcomes in a coordinated manner.

Mr. Hamidon (Malaysia): Let me begin by expressing my delegation's appreciation to the

Secretary General of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) for his report to the General Assembly (A/60/687). This report has certainly enriched our understanding of the issue before us and has aided our deliberations on this agenda item.

My delegation wishes to associate itself with the statement made earlier by the representative of South Africa on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The digital revolution in information and communication technologies (ICT) has indeed made a profound impact on almost every aspect of our daily lives and will continue to play a major role within the global community in shaping the future development of our world. Unfortunately, access to the benefits of ICT has not been evenly spread. The phenomenon now widely known as the digital divide, which exists between and within countries, between urban and rural areas, between the rich and the poor and between the educated and the illiterate, should not be allowed to cause further marginalization of nations and must be wisely addressed by the international community.

Given the disturbing trend in the digital divide, the Summits in Geneva and, subsequently, in Tunis devoted special attention to the need to avoid perpetuating the prevailing glaring inequities. The two landmark Summits have urged that immediate steps and measures must be taken to bridge the digital divide and bring the benefits of ICT to all. The World Summit on the Information Society was indeed a significant milestone in the effort by the international community to try collectively to harness the enormous potential of ICT so as to facilitate social and economic development.

Malaysia has long recognized the inextricable link between ICT and development, and in particular the need for a more inclusive, innovative and progressive approach to the realization of a global information society. In that regard, the Malaysian Government was happy to have played a role in the World Summit process. As a manifestation of our commitment to the aims and ideals of the World Summit, the Malaysian Government organized a Global Information Forum in the margins of the Summit.

The Tunis Summit has been dubbed a summit of solutions. Better access to information could greatly assist in reducing ignorance, and freer access to knowledge would certainly contribute to empowering people and Governments to achieve greater progress. We must acknowledge that ICT, if properly utilized, could help promote peace and tolerance on a global scale and accelerate the pace of economic and social development as envisaged in the Millennium Development Goals.

The Summit's resolutions and commitments have provided the necessary momentum to address many pressing global issues, in particular the vision to convert the digital divide into digital opportunities. However, the overall success of the World Summit should not blind us to the many challenges ahead, which are multifaceted and complex in nature.

Among those challenges are the following issues: how to improve current Internet coordination arrangements without undermining the stability of the Internet; how to provide ICT access to all without jeopardizing existing financial mechanisms; how to ensure that risk factors such as network and information security, encroachment of privacy and spam are reduced, if not eliminated altogether; how to create additional incentives to mobilize the appropriate parties to extend the network and attract new ICT users; and what is the best institutional environment that can foster market development and at the same time enable the achievement of connectivity goals?

Those challenges require a new commitment to work together if we are to realize the full benefits of the information society. That commitment must in turn manifest itself in the desire to fully implement the agreements reached at the Summit. We are therefore heartened that, as a manifestation of the will and desire of the international community to translate words into deeds, new initiatives and mechanisms have been established related to the governance of the global information society and the knowledge economy — sectors which are still not fully understood by some.

Malaysia is therefore pleased to be part of the Global Alliance for ICT Policy and Development. We hope to bring to the table our experiences and share the knowledge gathered from our involvement in similar forums such as Knowledge and ICT for Development Conference, which Malaysia had the privilege to organize in partnership with the Islamic Development Bank in Kuala Lumpur in June 2005.

The main aim of that forum was to facilitate collaboration among the States members of the

Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in the deployment of ICT for development. The main conclusions of the forum include the following. First is the realization the ICT can play a dual development role as an industry in itself and as an enabler for the development of other sectors. Knowledge and ICT for development is not only about ICT, but more about leveraging ICT as a source of economic development. Secondly, there is a need to clearly identify goals and the potential impediments to achieving those goals. The Malaysian experience shows that among the impediments may be the set of laws and regulations, which need to be reviewed. Other impediments may come in the form of information technology illiteracy, which will have to be addressed first if the information infrastructure is to be effectively utilized. Thirdly, there is the importance of inculcating strong mindsets in order to develop and adapt to changes. Strategies and implementation plans have to be explained well, with credible references cited, in order to get stakeholders, businesses and the public to buy in and to accept and partake in the new economy.

At the more political level, the ICT for Development forum was a clear manifestation of the political will of the Islamic countries to help one another in efforts to bring ourselves into the mainstream of the global developmental process.

Looking beyond Tunis, we must remember that it will be a true test for an engaged, empowered information society to ensure that the fruits of today's powerful knowledge-based tools are within the reach of people living in even the most impoverished economies. Communication and information must be readily available to all humanity, not just to the privileged few.

Mr. Khan (Pakistan): Let me at the outset thank the Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) for having presented the outcome documents of the two phases of the World Summit on the Information Society.

My delegation wishes to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of South Africa on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. As a member of the Group, we are also very happy to be among the sponsors of the draft resolution introduced by His Excellency Mr. Montasser Ouaili, Minister of Communication Technologies of Tunisia (A/60/L.50). We also join others in conveying our gratitude to the brotherly people and Government of Tunisia for hosting the second phase of the Summit.

At the 2005 world summit, our leaders committed themselves to building a people-centred and inclusive information society to enhance digital opportunities for all people in order to help bridge the digital divide. They also committed to putting the potential of information and communication technologies (ICT) at the service of development.

We see the World Summit process as a bold and unique attempt to address ICT issues through a structured and inclusive approach involving multi-stakeholder participation. The two-phased architecture of the Summit offered the space necessary for an all-encompassing, lively and productive dialogue on wide-ranging issues related to the prospective information society.

Clearly, the high-level political participation in both the Geneva and Tunis phases has provided much-needed political impetus to the evolving global vision of an information society. Pakistan welcomes the strong development orientation of the Summit outcome and calls for its full operationalization including in regard to the mandated processes such as the Forum on Internet Governance and the enhanced cooperation mechanism. We are hopeful that all the relevant actors and stakeholders will be contributing actively to the implementation of the Summit outcomes by initiating appropriate actions within their respective competencies.

Pakistan has been closely engaged in the Summit process throughout. More recently, as Chair of the Subcommittee on Internet Governance, Pakistan played a pivotal role in forging consensus in the difficult and complex area of internet governance. We believe that important issues such as Internet governance, cyber security, open source, freedom of expression and the role of the media need to be resolved in a manner that takes due cognizance of the interests of all stakeholders.

Pakistan's vision of an information society is one that is inclusive and affords opportunities to people regardless of frontiers, in order that they may benefit from the possibilities it brings in all spheres of human existence. Back home, we have attached high priority to putting in place the necessary physical and legal infrastructure that would facilitate integration into the information society. The Government is acting as an

enabler for the growth of ICT. A host of goals are being pursued under a separate, dynamic Information Technology Ministry. They include massive investment in education, training — especially information technology education and virtual universities — infrastructure development, increasing tele-density and universalizing access to the Internet. We have also evolved a comprehensive national ICT strategy and an effective mechanism to monitor its implementation.

We believe that if the opportunities were to be fully exploited, it would be necessary to develop capabilities to adapt, maintain, customize and reconfigure existing ICT solutions to our specific requirements.

We look forward to active and constructive engagement with Member States and all other relevant stakeholders to secure the full operationalization of the development orientation of the Summit outcomes in order to evenly distribute the benefits of ICT in a globalized world economy.

Mr. Dhakal (Nepal): Nepal recognizes that information and communication technologies (ICT) can play a significant role in achieving peace, justice and the economic and social advancement of all peoples in the world. ICT is a fundamental tool to foster social and economic development and are expected to contribute to strengthening international cooperation and friendly relations among Member States in achieving the noble objectives of the Charter of the United Nations. Nepal stands ready to work together with other Member States and the United Nations to promote digital solidarity in the twenty-first century.

My delegation shares the view expressed by the Secretary-General at the Tunis Summit, that information and communication technologies, "must generate new momentum towards developing the economies and societies of poor countries and transforming the lives of poor people". (*Press release SG/SM/10216*) We must focus on how ICT contributes to sustainable economic growth and social well-being and their role in the shift towards knowledge-based societies.

My delegation believes that the 11 basic principles of the Declaration of Principles of the World Summit on the Information Society, also termed action lines — including the importance of infrastructure as an essential foundation of the information society, the need for affordable access to information and knowledge, capacity-building, an enabling environment, and building confidence and security in the use of information and communication technologies, e-applications and international and regional cooperation — would greatly help us harness the potential of ICT.

My delegation considers that the targeted objectives and activities of the Plan of Action adopted at the Summit should contribute to enhancing the capacities of developing countries, particularly the least developed ones, to address the issues of the information society, including the use of information and communication technologies for development, cyber-security, Internet governance, affordable access to communications, infrastructure and capacity-building, cultural diversity and the media. The international community should help least developed countries in their national efforts to develop physical infrastructure and laws and regulations for the development of information technology.

Just as the United Nations is currently focusing its efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, the United Nations funds and programmes and the international community, including international financial institutions, should work towards the development of communication infrastructures and capabilities, taking into account the special needs and priorities of the developing and least developed countries in their national development efforts. Development of human and technical resources is essential for the improvement of information and communication systems in developing countries.

We feel that the digital domination and negative effect of globalization have made the rich richer and the poor poorer. The benefits and costs of globalization are very unevenly distributed. We must firmly and collectively reject that trend in order to avoid further marginalization of least developed countries in the globalizing world economy.

His Majesty Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev, King of Nepal, while addressing the World Summit on the Information Society held last November in Tunis, said,

> "We need to focus on how the global information revolution could be made a development enabler in the real sense, by contributing significantly to reducing poverty and promoting all-round

development in the world. This would provide us with a great opportunity to accelerate the process of bridging the gap between the haves and have-nots in terms of access to information technology. The international community needs to give special attention to the needs of the developing, landlocked and mountainous countries, which face problems of promoting the use of ICT due to high infrastructure costs."

The international community can benefit from that vision of His Majesty the King, which embodies the creation of an inclusive global information society in the twenty-first century.

The development of an inclusive information society should expand human capacity for access to the tools and technologies that people need, and should provide the education and training to use them effectively. Here, we feel that financial and technical impediments constrain many developing countries from establishing a knowledge-based economy. We believe that effective utilization of information and communication technologies will tremendously facilitate our endeavours to narrow the widening digital divide.

My delegation has taken note of the report of the Secretary-General (A/60/323), which provides information on the establishment of a United Nations system ICT strategic framework, knowledge sharing and knowledge management strategy and business case analyses for eight priority initiatives. We welcome the progress so far achieved, in terms of formulating a United Nations information and communication technologies charter, whose objectives would be based upon 15 initiatives under five areas of ICT, including development, ICT governance, information security, working together and sustaining the initiative.

The United Nations system must help reduce the disparities existing between developing and developed countries through delivery of concrete results in technical cooperation activities, effectiveness and impact on development programmes aimed at achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

Let me briefly touch upon national policies and programmes of Nepal involving information and communication technologies. His Majesty's Government of Nepal is committed to achieving the Millennium Development Goals through poverty alleviation, social development, social inclusion and good governance, as four main pillars of the current tenth five-year national development plan. His Majesty's Government considers that the development and use of information and communication technologies will enhance transparency and accountability in Government business and contribute to the overall socio-economic development of the country. The Government has adopted a national policy on information and communication technologies, and it is under implementation. The policy aims, among other things, at creating a conducive environment in which all stakeholders would benefit from the development of the information technology sector.

The Government is committed to making information technology accessible to rural people through community information centres around the country. My delegation is pleased to mention that our national programmes have played a significant role in the development and promotion of the ICT sector, despite various constraints and limited resources. An autonomous High-Level Commission for Information Technology has been established for developing physical infrastructure and laws for the development of the IT sector in the country. The work of the Commission, in collaboration with the private sector and other development partners, is expected to increase internal and external private investment in the new sectors of the national economy, including e-commerce. The partnership with multi-stakeholders, including the private sector, has been enhanced in the field of information technology. Internet service providers and users are rapidly increasing in number, and the national market of the IT sector is expanding.

It is very unfortunate that in recent years, terrorist activities have destroyed some of the telecommunication infrastructure in my country. His Majesty's Government is fully committed to restoring peace and security and to protecting the lives and property of our people.

A new world information and communication order is developing. With a view to achieving the goal of an inclusive information society, the existing disparities between the North and the South must be reduced. The international community should provide financial and technical cooperation to least developed countries, taking into account their special interests and needs in order to achieve overall socio-economic development objectives.

Mr. Wali (Nigeria): We are pleased that this meeting has been convened today to enable the Assembly conclude its debate on agenda item 49, "Information and communication technologies for development". We align ourselves with the statement made by the representative of South Africa on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Nigeria recognizes the vital need to move quickly to bridge the digital divide in order to tap the vast potential of information and communication technologies (ICT) in enhancing the attainment of development goals and socio-economic growth. We therefore welcome the adoption of the draft resolution on the follow-up to the World Summit on the Information Society (A/60/L.50). I should emphasize that Nigeria attaches great importance to the outcome of the two phases of the Summit and calls on Member States and other relevant stakeholders to fulfil the commitments they have made. President Obasanjo of Nigeria has demonstrated his country's commitment to the overall objectives of ICT through his attendance at the Summit as well as through a financial contribution to the Digital Solidarity Fund.

Mindful of the benefits of ICT, we have incorporated an ambitious ICT programme into our National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy, an all-encompassing national development strategy. We are convinced that ICT will contribute to the realization of the objectives of the Strategy, which in turn will put Nigeria on track to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. We are encouraging and promoting e-governance in our public sector reforms to improve service delivery and efficiency.

Nigeria welcomes the attention given to the circumstances of developing countries and countries with special needs, especially in Africa, in the area of information and communication technologies. It is important that the international community provide affordable access to ICT, that it ensure that its facilities are people-centred and carry local content and, at the same time, that it be mindful of the diversity of the global community. We hope that concerted efforts will be made to translate words into action through full and urgent implementation of the agreements and plans of action agreed at Geneva and Tunis in the context of the World Summit on the Information Society.

Mr. Atieh (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to express my delegation's support for the statements made by the representative of South Africa, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and by the representative of the United Arab Emirates, on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

We thank the fraternal State of Tunisia for all its efforts in organizing the World Summit on the Information Society. In particular, we would like to thank Mr. Montasser Ouaili, Minister for Communication Technologies of Tunisia, for helping to ensure the success of that very important international event and for introducing the draft resolution (A/60/L.50) before us.

The broad participation by States in the Tunis phase of the World Summit on the Information Society showed the true resolve of the representatives of the world's countries to build an information society open to all peoples of the world so that they can use, develop, exchange and gain access to information in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

The Tunis Agenda for the Information Society, adopted at the conclusion of the Tunis phase of the World Summit, reaffirms the resolve of United Nations Member States to honour the commitments made at the Geneva phase of the Summit. The Agenda emphasizes the development of financial mechanisms to bridge the digital divide and the need to manage the Internet and all related technologies in order to implement the Geneva Declaration and to ensure follow-up to the Tunis phase of the Summit.

In that connection, we stress the language agreed upon at Tunis, which reaffirms the commitments undertaken during the first phase at Geneva regarding new principles for the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) to promote peace, as well as the need to consider the special needs of certain sectors of society in order to assist poor countries and countries that have suffered from natural disasters.

A number of basic global agreements were reached at the Tunis phase of the Summit. An essential element of these is a special agreement on Internet governance, which is based on a number of important concepts such as the responsibility of Governments to play their appropriate role in managing the Internet while ensuring its stability and proper functioning.

My delegation appreciates the contribution of United Nations agencies and organizations to the joint efforts of Governments, civil society, non-governmental organizations and the private sector in the area of ICT with a view to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Syria has promptly adopted measures speedily to provide technology services. We have also restructured the communication sector on the basis of a strategic plan taking into account the legislative aspects of its implementation through the adoption of programmes promoting ICT, and we have provided for appropriate infrastructure so that investments can be made in that sector. We are convinced that the Internet's resources must be distributed in an equitable manner and are committed to cultural diversity on the Internet. We believe that the digital divide between developed and developing countries should be bridged through a global process in which the international community — including international organizations, in particular the United Nations — would participate.

Once again, we thank the delegation of the fraternal country of Tunisia and all those who assisted in preparing the draft resolution, whose adoption by consensus we support.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/60/L.50, entitled "World Summit on the Information Society". May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/60/L.50?

Draft resolution A/60/L.50 was adopted (resolution 60/252).

The Acting President: I would like to thank the Minister of Communication Technologies of Tunisia for being with us today. The General Assembly has concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 49.

Agenda item 112 (*continued*)

Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections

(a) Election of twenty members of the Committee for Programme and Coordination

Note by the Secretary-General (A/60/216/Add.1)

The Acting President: Pursuant to General Assembly decision 42/450 of 17 December 1987 and upon the nomination of the Economic and Social Council, the Assembly elects the members of the Committee for Programme and Coordination. Members will recall that at its 43rd plenary meeting, held on 3 November 2005, the General Assembly elected 18 members to the Committee for a three-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2006.

Members will also recall that there remained two vacancies to be filled from among the Western European and other States.

In this connection, the Assembly has before it a note by the Secretary-General contained in document A/60/216/Add.1. As indicated in that document, the Economic and Social Council has nominated Israel to fill one of the two remaining vacancies from among the Western European and other States. The term of office would begin on the date of election and would expire on 31 December 2008.

In accordance with rule 92 of the Rules of Procedure, all elections should be held by secret ballot and there shall be no nominations. However, I should like to recall paragraph 16 of General Assembly decision 34/401, whereby the practice of dispensing with the secret ballot for elections to subsidiary organs when the number of candidates corresponds to the number of seats to be filled should become standard, unless a delegation specifically requests a vote in a given election.

In the absence of such a request, may I take it that the Assembly decides to proceed to the election on the basis of dispensing with the secret ballot?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: May I therefore take it that the Assembly wishes to declare Israel elected a member of the Committee for Programme and Coordination for a term of office beginning on 27 March 2006 and expiring on 31 December 2008?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: I congratulate Israel on its election as a member of the Committee for Programme and Coordination.

Regarding the remaining vacancy from among the Western European and other States, the General Assembly will be in a position to act on it upon the nomination by the Economic and Social Council of a Member State from that region.

We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 112.

The meeting rose at 4:55 p.m.